

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## SIX CALIFORNIA BUTTERFLIES LISTED AS ENDANGERED

Six species of California butterflies that are being crowded into the ocean by human development, have been protected by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which determined they are endangered species. This decision was published in the Federal Register June 2, 1976.

These are the first insects to be listed as endangered by the Government.

California's coastline is one of the most scenic in the Nation. Strung along the coast is a string of isolated dune, salt marsh, bog, and mountain ecosystems--each unique and fragile. But California's human population is also concentrated along this same coastline, and poses a conflict with the above ecosystems. Five previously listed endangered species (Santa Cruz slender-toed salamander, San Francisco garter snake, California clapper rail, light-footed clapper rail, and Morro Bay kangaroo rat) occur along California's coast.

The six butterflies are the San Bruno elfin, lotis blue, mission blue, Smith's blue, El Segundo blue, and Lange's metalmark. They are faced with the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of their habitats or ranges. An intensive review of the six shows the following:

The San Bruno Elfin. This butterfly's remaining habitat is limited to a few moist canyons in San Mateo County, California. Proposed development poses a serious threat to its continued existence. The butterfly is dependent upon the present lay of the land and the floral elements in the valleys. The most important weak spot in the butterfly's life cycle is its caterpillar food plant, stone-crop.

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The Lotis Blue. This butterfly is known to live in an isolated bog in Mendocino County, California. The principal portion of the butterfly's habitat occurs on a powerline right-of-way. Formerly, a population of the lotis blue occurred at Point Arena, Mendocino County, California, but it has not been found there for over 30 years, and the population there may be extirpated.

The Mission Blue. This butterfly is limited in distribution to two small isolated populations which live on the summits of Twin Peaks, San Francisco County, and the San Bruno Mountains, San Mateo County, California. In San Francisco County, the mission blue was formerly more widespread on the higher hills, but due to expansion of the city and plantings of exotic plants such as eucalyptus, it is now reduced to a tiny remnant on Twin Peaks and may soon become extirpated. In the San Bruno Mountains, the species is uncommon, and proposed developments there probably would eliminate the butterfly.

The Smith's Blue. This butterfly lives on coastal sand dunes in Monterey County, California. Its largest population occurs on the coastal side of the Monterey dune complex at Seaside and probably Fort Ord, Monterey County, California. The Seaside and Marina populations have been almost extirpated by housing developments and highway construction, while the Fort Ord populations have been most seriously impacted by heavy foot and vehicle traffic as well as the spread of introduced ice-plant.

The El Segundo Blue. This butterfly was formerly widespread on the El Segundo sand hills of Los Angeles County, California. Now, due to public and private development, the El Segundo blue is limited to a few acres near El Segundo and a larger area at the west end of the Los Angeles International Airport. Any further development on these few remaining sites could well bring about the species extinction.

The Lange's Metalmark. This butterfly originally lived on the sand dunes near Antioch and Oakley in Contra Costa County, California. It has not been found at Oakley for more than 30 years. Near Antioch the populations are now largely restricted to a few acres north of Wilbur Road. Alteration of the species habitat has been due largely to industrial and agricultural development.

The Fish and Wildlife Service believes that the public attention focused on these butterflies by the listing itself will engender the kind of local support needed to protect their living space. Two of the species, for example, live in an area that is proposed for a county park--a move which may provide them the protection they need. Two others are living in power companies' rights-of-way for power lines and only minimal management of the flora will provide protection to these butterflies.

This listing of the six California species follows the listing of two Florida butterflies as threatened on April 28, 1976.

The listing of these six species as endangered brings to 433 the total number of animals now listed as endangered worldwide. Of these, 145 species are native to the United States.